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Joe Biden's 'Ministry of Truth'

BY JOE CONCHA, OPINION CONTRIBUTOR - 05/05/22 8:00 AM ET
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The Biden administration's Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced this week that it has launched what is being dubbed a Disinformation Governance Board to combat "misinformation."

No, really.

A government agency creating a "ministry of truth" to combat what it deems misinformation? And it's going to fall under the leadership of DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas? The guy presiding over the worst border crisis of our lifetimes, who publicly denies it is a crisis at all while privately admitting it is? Who better to give more responsibility in a democracy that largely rejects government oversight over free speech? What could possibly go wrong?

The person chosen to lead this new "Committee of Public Information" under Mayorkas is Nina Jankowicz, who calls herself "a disinformation fellow" and a Russian disinformation expert.

This is always a fun game to play: Let's say Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) had decided to create a "Disinformation Governance Board" in the state of Florida. And to lead that effort, let's say he chose someone who once openly pushed a partisan conspiracy theory. You can only imagine the exclamations about a "chilling attack on democracy" and totalitarianism rearing its head in the Sunshine State.

Here's what Mayorkas's choice to helm Biden's "Ministry of Truth" once said about Hunter Biden's infamous laptop, which many on the left and in the media dubbed as Russian disinformation in the weeks before the 2020 election.

"We should view it as a Trump campaign product," Jankowicz said of the story at the time. "Not to mention that the emails don't need to be altered to be part of an influence campaign. Voters deserve that context, not a [fairy] tale about a laptop repair shop," she also tweeted in October 2020.

Well, it turns out the laptop from hell really is just that for Hunter Biden and possibly his father, the sitting president. The New York Times and The Washington Post, which both pushed the same conspiracy theory that the laptop came from Russia to hurt Joe Biden and help Donald Trump, recently confirmed that the laptop and its contents belong to Hunter Biden. A federal investigation into Hunter is expanding, with reports that he may have violated money laundering, tax and foreign lobbying laws.

The new head of the "Ministry of Truth" isn't tweeting much about that investigation these days. Why is that?

Jankowicz was also a big fan of the now-discredited (and laughable) Steele dossier. Here's what she tweeted about a guest appearance that Christopher Steele made on something called the "Infotagion" podcast: "Listened to this last night. Chris Steele (yes THAT Chris Steele) provides some great historical context about the evolution of disinfo. Worth a listen."

Steele's sources have since been proven not to be credible. His allegations of Russian collusion with the Trump campaign, of Russian hookers and "pee tapes" — also not credible. Yet Jankowicz once recommended that we listen to "THAT Chris Steele" when it comes to disinformation.

And here's what she tweeted in recent days about Elon Musk's purchase of Twitter: "Last week I told @NPRMICHEL: I shudder to think about if free speech absolutists were taking over more platforms, what that would look like for the marginalized communities ... which are already shouldering ... disproportionate amounts of this abuse."

This pro-Steele anti-Musker will report to Mayorkas, who said in congressional testimony this week that he inherited "a broken and dismantled" immigration and border security system from the Trump administration and that "only Congress can fix this." He added, "Yet we have effectively managed an unprecedented number of non-citizens seeking to enter the United States."

Border crossings have skyrocketed under Biden-Mayorkas, surpassing an estimated 2 million in 2021. The numbers weren't remotely near those under Trump. It was the Biden administration that stopped border wall construction and ended an effective "Remain in Mexico" policy for asylum-seekers. It was Biden who as a presidential candidate urged migrants to "surge the border" — and they listened.

The guy whose agency is launching a Disinformation Governance Board also, without evidence, accused his own Border Patrol agents of whipping migrants, saying that it "painfully conjured up the worst elements of our nation's ongoing battle against systemic racism."

You get the point. Mayorkas and Jankowicz are two of the last people who should be leading any "Ministry of Truth." And the U.S. government shouldn't even have considered creating something like this to be run by partisans with political agendas.

Yet this horrible idea appeared to be in the works for some time among Democrats.

"There's absolutely a commission that's being discussed, but it seems to be more investigating in style rather than truth and reconciliation," Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) said in an Instagram video in 2018. "I do think that several members of Congress in some of my discussions have brought up media literacy because that is part of what happened here. We're going to have to figure out how we rein in our media environment so you can't just spew disinformation and misinformation."

"Rein in our media environment" — how comforting, coming from AOC. Here's what she said in a 2018 "60 Minutes" interview when asked about how she'd been fact-checked about her dubious public comments:

"People want to really blow up one figure here or one word there. I would argue that they're missing the forest for the trees. I think that there's a lot of people more concerned about being precisely, factually and semantically correct than about being morally right."

What an utterly fascinating way to define truth: *Hey, it's not that important to be factually correct, as long as a person is, from their own perspective, morally right.*

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Maybe Mayorkas can add AOC — who really seemed to care about conditions at border facilities until a Democratic president made her suddenly lose her voice — as an honorary spokesperson for the new "Ministry of Truth."

The Biden administration says it simply wants to battle misinformation. The best way to start might be to purchase a large mirror. When you blame Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine for inflation that has been rising for well over a year or blame Trump for the current state of the U.S. border or say democracy is at stake if voting rights aren't federalized, then the arbiters-of-truth business isn't one it should be in.

Joe Concha is a media and politics columnist.

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